

TPS_Kathleen.m4a

Speaker 1 [00:00:02] So hello. We're, I'm here today with Kathleen who's a peer supporter with Turning Point Scotland. We are up in the Banff office in the very north of the northeast, right on the coast. And we're going to hear today about Kathleen's journey and how she became involved in and is now a peer supporter with Turning Point. So thanks, Kathleen, for joining me today and agreeing to to share some of your journey. I wonder if you might tell us a little bit about that, how how you came to be involved with Turning Point yourself?

Speaker 2 [00:00:45] Eh Well, it was because of my husband's alcohol addiction and, he had an alcohol dependency for quite a number of years and I chose to look after him, and support him through his addiction. It wasn't an easy journey, very, very difficult. I was holding down a job, a responsible job, and ay...

Speaker 1 [00:01:17] What was your job, Kathleen?

Speaker 2 [00:01:18] I was a home carer...

Speaker 1 [00:01:20] OK.

Speaker 2 [00:01:21] ... dealing with complex needs and a lot of hard work. And ay, when I was at work I used to worry about my husband because I knew when I went home I wasn't prepared for what I was going to come across. And a lot of the time it wasn't nice. He would have fallen. Gashed his head open, and I had to contend with it. There was occasions he took a seizure. I had to deal with that and clear his mouth and speak with the ambulance service.

Speaker 1 [00:02:03] Goodness me.

Speaker 2 [00:02:03] And I dealt with it, but I couldn't not do anything. I just went into automatic, ay, gear and just started clearing his mouth until the ambulance came and they took him to hospital. But lots of different things happened to him. But when, my work concerned, I never told my employer, I never told my workmates about my situation. It was very difficult to speak to people because of the stigma of alcohol. And I just thought everybody was speaking about me if I went out in the street and a lot of people knew my husband.

Speaker 1 [00:02:56] OK

Speaker 2 [00:02:57] And didl just felt, you know, tongues were wagging,

Speaker 1 [00:03:01] Goodness me, what a stressful situation and time it must have been. So you were working in the community as a carer. [Yes]. And then coming home after work and dealing with your husband's alcohol problems?

Speaker 2 [00:03:14] Yes.

Speaker 1 [00:03:15] And taking that stigma and that isolation that must have been a very difficult time. [Yes].

Speaker 2 [00:03:22] I was very isolated because I just had to look after my family, look after my husband. I had no time for myself because everything was dependent on them. But the family inspirations group was set up and I went along to it and Tanja was a great support to me and it just snowballed from there. It carried on for quite a number of years, well maybe 4, and ay, then the peer support came into being.

Speaker 1 [00:04:06] So the family inspiration group, was that a community group? Was it a specific...

Speaker 2 [00:04:11] it was the recovery cafe for families as well. So it was good because it got me into things and ay, I was cooking and I was helping the community. I just felt a bit good about myself because well my husband had passed away for this time and I had time, but time to reflect as well on what I've been through to, you know.

Speaker 1 [00:04:47] Okay, Okay. So you had lost your husband by this by the time you found this group [Yes] okay. I am so very sorry for your loss.

Speaker 2 [00:04:55] Yeah

Speaker 1 [00:04:56] And as you're saying, the group maybe gave you some time that you'd not been having prior.

Speaker 2 [00:05:04] Yes, it did. I met different people, you know, out with my family and my home, which that's all I had to contend with, you know, and it made a big difference to me at that time. And then the months went on and just enjoyed it all the more. And then we moved to different premises. We went to the Apex Church Hall.

Speaker 1 Okay

Speaker 2 so that's where we are now. But to I did to sign up to do the peer support training with Tracy and it was the best thing I've ever done because it built up my confidence during the training. I had to speak about myself and my husband. Ay, I didn't have to, but I wanted to because I trusted the people that were training me and I opened up a good bit more than I would have and I just feel good about how I managed to talk to Tracey and I think it was Mike, it was doing the training at that time.

Speaker 1 [00:06:25] Okay. Is it safe to say even at the training point, was it was it therapeutic to talk about your situation in that safe space? Where there was trust

Speaker 2 [00:06:36] Yes, I think just deep inside there was something wanting to come out because I had bottled everything up during the the years of my husband's addiction. You know?

Speaker 1 [00:06:54] Mmm, where you carried that incredible burden, as you were telling us. [Yes]. With work and then coming home and having all that responsibility for his care was something that like you say, you'd carried alone

Speaker 2 [00:07:08] That's right. I had nobody really to help me because I mean, his parents were elderly and well had two sons. I mean I did call on them when it was really needed. I just fought the burden on my own really when it all boils down to it. I just carried on, I don't know how or where I got the strength from but as I said, the peer support service has helped me a lot. I have done a lot fo training and different things. And it's been

good and good to e-learning as well. So I've done some of that. Ay, I can't remember all the things I've done! We went onto Zoom during the pandemic, you know, and that well. Zoom was new to me. It was strange and scary, but I got used to it.

Speaker 1 [00:08:13] It's a scary time wasn't it. [Yes]. When we were all in that initial ... so in the Family Inspiration Group, you made a decision to get involved with the peer support?

Speaker 2 [00:08:24] Yes.

Speaker 1 [00:08:24] So for those who don't know very much about it, what is peer support? What's it all about?

Speaker 2 [00:08:30] Well, it's. Well, I've lived experience. [Okay. Yeah], that's something not been an addict, an addiction to me, but having to cope with an addiction. So I just felt per support had done me a lot of good and I ended up being a facilitator of the Recovery Cafe Family Inspirations.

Speaker 1 [00:09:01] Wow. Okay, so you went from being one of the members in the group to leading the group with the training [Mmmhmm] and okay.

Speaker 2 [00:09:10] I to I just felt I needed to help other people that may be going through similar things, circumstances and to just be there for somebody that maybe wanted to talk with you, be a good listener and not judge them and make them welcome and we cook a meal for them.

Speaker 1 [00:09:38] Okay.

Speaker 2 [00:09:39] And they enjoy it. I think, I hope! It makes you feel good about yourself. Cos I never thought about myself. Never, ever. As long as everybody else was okay. That mattered to me, it still matters to me. I think. I don't put myself first. It's just something that's in me, you know?

Speaker 1 [00:10:11] So what does it involve now that you lead this peer support group? You were mentioning there, about cooking food, about listening. How does it work? Is it something that you do every day or once a week? What's the kind of the rhythm of it?

Speaker 2 [00:10:28] Well, the Family Inspiration groups on a Wednesday. Half past four to half past six and ay, you have the regular ones. And you have ay, an odd one will maybe pop in and ay, I mean, you just get to know them and listen to what they want to speak about and praside them when it's needed and well just making sure they're okay and if there's any problems. I know I can refer back to Tracy, the peer support service [Okay] any issues

Speaker 1 [00:11:11] Okay. So there's a central level with the service that you can draw on for support and refer people to, all kind of thing. [Yeah, yeah.] Okay. And I think I heard you say there that you get something very tangible out of being a facilitator for you. So maybe you were overlooked quite a lot through those very difficult days. And it doesn't mean that we don't care about other people, but that there's something there for you to support others who might have some parallels with your journey and your story.

Speaker 2 [00:11:56] Yes. I just feel that there's support there now that I didn't receive and aim, and I suppose maybe if I had the support, it was, nothing was offered.

Speaker 1 [00:12:15] Okay. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 2 [00:12:18] It might have been different, you know, but I just feel that I want to give back to people. What I went through with with my husband, you know, to make sure that people are okay to a point.

Speaker 1 [00:12:37] Okay. So then what's the training like? You must deal with a broad variety of situations with people who come to the group. How are you? How are you trained to deal with those?

Speaker 2 [00:12:51] Well, it's in the training. You had training about boundaries. And ay I mean if issues occur I mean you're told the best steps would be to take if there was issues arose ay, like maybe somebody coming in trying to come in with alcohol in them. We just couldn't have that allowed because it could trigger some of the people that are there in recovery.

Speaker 1 [00:13:23] Goodness me. So I. Yes, see what you mean. So if someone attends, the group is under the influence, which is very hard. Okay. Okay. So you must have to be quite assertive, um, to lead the group?

Speaker 2 [00:13:39] Yes. I'm not a pushy fashion, but I think if I saw something wasn't right, I would say.

Speaker 1 [00:13:47] Okay.

Speaker 2 [00:13:48] You know, in a in a diplomatic kind of way, I'm not a forceful person.

Speaker 1 [00:13:54] Yeah. So does the being the facilitator, leading the group, does it build confidence? And.

Speaker 2 [00:14:04] Yes, I think it does. Yeah. I just feel a bit more useful to people.

Speaker 1 [00:14:13] I see. Yeah. And you were saying you've had lots of training there and also in the digital space and. [Yeah]. Okay. So I think you were telling me earlier about how your experiences leading the community groups also feeds back into the training. So the training kind of evolves

Speaker 2 [00:14:38] Yeah it could. Mm. And I mean on Zoom, we've met a lot of different people, different friends and but we're still on a zoom to this day, you know, like once or twice a week it's continued and it's people from further north and they've become quite friendly is just like we've known them all their days, you know?

Speaker 1 [00:15:06] So there's a real personal element here. [Yeah]. And what's what's your sense of the scale of the problem with alcohol and drugs, in our area? Do you do you get a sense of how big the problem is? Is your group big and how do you manage it?

Speaker 2 [00:15:25] Well, it's not a very big group. It is big enough to, you know, facilitate. But I know there is a lot of alcohol in the area and I feel so sad about it. You

know, I just wish that people received the proper help. You know, because I know in my experience the proper help at some point in time was never given, you know?

Speaker 1 [00:16:02] And ultimately you lost your husband without that and so what you're doing now is supporting people to access that help I suppose [yes]. And then, going back to you, and if you don't mind my asking, I can hear very clearly that there are a lot of rewards and a lot of personal gains from doing this work. I wonder, is it difficult as well, thinking of your loss and your husband? Is that a hard part of the role?

Speaker 2 [00:16:43] It was hard because I'd lost my husband and my life was just completely changed. You know, I went from my hands, were going very, very fast and never stopped until just it finally stopped. I did have the hard work with my husband, which I really wondered what happened to me, you know, looking after him. It was such a strange feeling and it took me a long time to kind of get to grips with that.

Speaker 1 [00:17:19] Okay

Speaker 2 [00:17:19] You know, it affected me because he was always there and I just had everything to do for him because he had also lost the power of his right hand. And I had to do everything for him, cut up his food...

Speaker 1 [00:17:42] Such a huge part of your life, especially when things were difficult.

Speaker 2 Yes. Yeah. [Okay]

Speaker 2 [00:17:47] But there's one exception I received from my husband's addiction was SVQ two.

Speaker 1 [00:17:56] Oh, okay.

Speaker 2 [00:17:57] I, I noticed it in one of the carers magazines that I read there was an advert about people wanting to do this training. So I said, I don't know if I'm eligible for this, and I read it again and plucked up the courage to phone. And I spoke to a very nice lady who got abck to me. And I said, I don't know if I can do this because I says my husband's alcohol dependent. She says, you're just this type of person we are looking for

Speaker 1 [00:18:33] Right, okay

Speaker 2 [00:18:34] So it just started from there. I did my training with this lady. She was very, very nice. She came down from Huntly every second week and put me through that training. Hmm. And I was so delighted, you know, because I didn't think I could do it. And it just gave me a wee bit more pride in myself that I had achieved that. I didn't get it done to my work, which should have been. But it never it never happened. And I felt so proud that I'd done it. And just. Just a self-achievement about myself.

Speaker 1 [00:19:24] Hmm. Out of such a difficult time to achieve something that could be useful for you and others.

Speaker 2 [00:19:30] That's right.

Speaker 1 [00:19:31] So this has led, you now, to being a peer supporter and leading and facilitating these groups in the online space and in person. [Yeah]. Is it on a voluntary basis?

Speaker 2 [00:19:46] Yes it is.

Speaker 1 [00:19:46] So you're a volunteer?

Speaker 2 [00:19:50] Yes a volunteer

Speaker 1 [00:19:51] Okay. And does it? Do you. Does it use a lot of your time?

Speaker 2 [00:19:56] Well, I'm kept busy because on Wednesdays I pick up fare share from Asda, it's food. It's well it depends. It's different items each week and it helps towards the recovery Café. Sometimes it's given to the people that come. If there's anything of any benefit to them, if they want to take it, can take it. And people not there that's sometimes been to the group then I stop off there and had them a bag of goodies.

Speaker 1 [00:20:34] Goodness me. Yeah. So. So as well as a safe space for people to come and talk about problems they might be having with drugs and alcohol. There's also food aids there as well that you facilitate and ensure for people that that really is it's astonishing. So it's quite a broad service that you. And what about support for you? We were talking earlier there about the load on you, as you run these groups both online, in-person, meeting people's needs, not only maybe with addiction and problems with alcohol, drugs, but also, with cost-of-living things like the food - is there support for you? You mentioned earlier Tracey here in the Banff office and Karen as well. Is there a kind of HQ where you get support

Speaker 2 [00:21:40] Well, if there is anything bothering me, I just call and Tracey you know to. Okay, but I don't think about myself. That's the thing.

Speaker 1 [00:21:49] Okay.

Speaker 2 [00:21:50] I never have really. It's just how I am. I've just been that kind of person. That's that's helped people for quite a number of years, work wise and family wise.

Speaker 1 [00:22:05] And it's really amazing to to hear a little bit about your story and how you've gone from this place of isolation and stigma to this role in the community. Doing so much for people and to support people hopefully to a route to recovery, and perhaps a better outcome. It sounds like your training is is very kind of full and comprehensive for all types of situations. And with support here, I wonder where you would like to see the peer support service going, where should it if at all change and adapt to in future?

Speaker 2 [00:22:55] Well, I suppose the more training you get, the better. You know, a I mean, I did a lot of training with my last employment and confidentiality was very important to me because it was always drummed into us that you don't speak about people out with and how people live. You would go to other people's homes. You went in and did your work, came out, closed the door behind you. And that's how I still think, you know, my work. My employment has rubbed off from me. So I, I take confidentiality in this volunteering in a peer support, very serious, you know, and I wouldn't ay, you know, go against people's confidentiality.

Speaker 1 [00:23:55] Is that part of making the safe spaces where people can come and escape, maybe stigma and isolation and things like that? [I hope so], if they feel that their stories are respected and kept.

Speaker 2 [00:24:10] Yeah.

Speaker 1 [00:24:11] Okay. Well, thank you so very much for for telling me a little bit about the service. It's it's incredible the work that you're doing on a voluntary basis and the relationships that you have with people. I'm a massive admirer of what you do, and we hope that these podcasts can help publicise some of that work a little bit, both for people who might be experiencing problems with drugs and alcohol, as well as people who want to get involved in the service itself. Um, I wonder if you might on that new have any advice for people who might want to get involved.

Speaker 2 [00:24:58] Well, just take that step. It makes an awful difference to your life. It brings your confidence into the spotlight. And I know I did right going for the peer support training. And I've never looked back, really, you know.

Speaker 1 [00:25:18] So on a personal level, do you feel a difference after being involved?

Speaker 2 [00:25:23] Yes.

Speaker 1 [00:25:23] And that's a positive one?

Speaker 2 [00:25:24] Well, yes.

Speaker 1 [00:25:26] In terms of confidence?

Speaker 2 [00:25:28] In confidence and making new friends really.

Speaker 1 [00:25:31] Play

Speaker 2 [00:25:33] And just doing different training. It's an opportunity. And Well, I'm glad that I did the training.

Speaker 1 [00:25:44] Sounds like a whole new way of life from a sort of professional dimension to a lot of the recovery cafes. I get the sense they feel like a family kind of?

Speaker 2 [00:25:56] Yes, that's right. That well, that's how it comes to be. You get so, you know, people will talk to you and will say this happened today and I'll let you see this this photograph and things like that. But you have to show a great interest in them. You know?

Speaker 1 [00:26:17] Very personal indeed.

Speaker 2 [00:26:20] Yeah. And I mean, it's not only alcohol and drug addictions, it's people with mental health problems as well. Come to our Group.

Speaker 1 [00:26:29] Okay.

Speaker 2 [00:26:31] So you have to be, you know, give them a little bit of kindness and listen to them. As I say, I had mental illness in my family as well.

Speaker 1 [00:26:45] So there's spaces for acceptance and listening. So, so very valuable. And not only I'm hearing you say for drugs and alcohol, but for people struggling with a variety of issues, including mental health problems.

Speaker 2 [00:27:04] Yes, that's right.

Speaker 1 [00:27:06] Well, Kathleen, thank you ever so much for sharing some of your story. It's just a privilege to learn a little bit about it. And I hope we can raise some awareness of the amazing peer support services for others out there who may be interested.

Speaker 2 [00:27:21] Okay. Thank you very much.

Speaker 1 [00:27:23] Thank you.

Speaker 2 [00:27:23] Its been a pleasure speaking to you.

Speaker 1 [00:27:26] Thank you. Likewise.